

AUGUST 2, 1976

# AFTERTHOUGHTS ON THE OLYMPICS

ANNCR: VOA NEWS ANALYST RONALD J. DUNLAVEY HAS THESE THOUGHTS  
ON THE CONCLUSION OF THE OLYMPIC GAMES:

VOICE: IT SEEMS THE HEIGHT OF INGRATITUDE TO ENJOY A GOOD SHOW AND  
THEN CRITICIZE IT---BUT THAT IS WHAT A LOT OF PEOPLE ARE DOING IN  
THE WAKE OF THE TWENTY-FIRST OLYMPIC GAMES. THEY SAY, THE  
OLYMPIC GAMES ARE INCREASINGLY AFFLICTED BY THE INTER-RELATED  
EVILS OF NATIONALISM, COMMERCIALISM, POLITICIALIZATION,  
SUBSIDIZATION, EXCESSIVE COST AND EXCESSIVE DIGNITY. (OPT) THE  
ORIGINAL PURE SPIRIT OF THE OLYMPIC GAMES IS BEING GRADUALLY LOST,  
THEY SAY; THE IDEAL IS BEING SUBMERGED UNDER A WELTER OF SELF-  
SERVING INTERESTS. (END OPT.)

NONE ONE CAN DENY THE VALIDITY OF THESE CRITICISMS. THE ROOT  
EVIL SEEMS TO BE EXCESSIVE NATIONALISM. INSTEAD OF A CONTEST  
OF COMPETING ATHLETES, THE OLYMPIC GAMES HAVE TENDED TO BE MORE  
AND MORE A RIVALRY OF COMPETING NATIONS. (OPT). THIS RIVALRY  
IS PERHAPS BEST SYMBOLIZED BY THE CUSTOM OF PLAYING THE NATIONAL  
ANTHEM AND RAISING THE NATIONAL FLAG OF THE COUNTRY FROM WHICH THE  
INDIVIDUAL WINNER OF A CONTEST COMES. IT IS REFLECTED, TOO, IN THE  
UNOFFICIAL CUSTOM OF ADDING UP MEDAL TOTALS ON A COUNTRY-BY-COUNTRY  
BASIS. (END OPT). AND THIS RIVALRY OBVIOUSLY LEADS TO EXTRAORDINARY  
LENGTHS OF SUBSIDIZATION BY SOME GOVERNMENTS WHO SEE THE OLYMPIC  
GAMES AS AN OPPORTUNITY TO REFLECT CREDIT ON THEMSELVES. (OPT.)  
UNQUESTIONABLY, THIS IS SOMETHING WITH WHICH THE INTERNATIONAL  
OLYMPIC COMMITTEE WILL HAVE TO DEAL. WITHIN THE YEARS AHEAD IT  
WILL HAVE TO DEAL, TOO, WITH THE PROBLEM OF POLITICIALIZATION BY  
COUNTRIES TRYING TO USE THE OLYMPIC GAMES TO SCORE POINTS AGAINST  
THEIR POLITICAL RIVALS BY HAVING THEM EXCLUDED. (END OPT.)

ONE MIGHT SUGGEST, HOWEVER, THAT THERE IS ANOTHER EVIL -- OVER-IDEALIZATION. THE OLYMPIC GAMES MAY HAVE BEEN OVER-IDEALIZED IN TWO WAYS. FIRST, A GREAT DEAL OF RHETORIC HAS BEEN EXPENDED TO REPRESENT OLYMPIC COMPETITION AS ONE OF THE NOBLEST ENDEAVORS OF MAN, REFLECTING WHAT IS PUREST AND BEST IN THE HUMAN SPIRIT. IN REALITY, THE OLYMPIC GAMES ARE PHYSICAL CONTESTS PROVING THAT ONE PERSON CAN RUN, JUMP OR SWIM FASTER THAN ANOTHER---AND NOT MUCH MORE. SECOND, THE GAMES MAY HAVE BEEN OVER-RATED AS A MEANS OF FOSTERING INTERNATIONAL GOODWILL AND COMPETITION.

THE NEED FOR REFORMS IS OBVIOUS; OTHERWISE THE GAMES WILL INEVITABLY DETERIORATE. BUT THE REALITIES CANNOT BE IGNORED, AND TO EXPECT PERFECTION IS A MISTAKE. IN THE WORDS OF ONE SPORTS WRITER: "BECAUSE THE OLYMPICS INVOLVE SPORTS, THE IDEALISTS BELIEVE THAT THEY SHOULD BE EXEMPT FROM THE SINS OF MANKIND." BUT SPORTS DO NOT EXIST IN ISOLATION, AND ATHLETES DO NOT LIVE IN A WORLD APART. THE OLYMPIC GAMES WILL UNQUESTIONABLY CONTINUE TO REFLECT---TO SOME EXTENT, AT LEAST ---THE POLITICAL REALITIES OF THE WORLD AND THE IMPERFECTIONS OF HUMANITY. IF THIS IS KEPT IN MIND---AND SOME NEEDED PROCEDURAL REFORMS ARE AGREED UPON---THERE IS NO REASON WHY THE OLYMPIC GAMES SHOULD NOT CONTINUE TO PROVIDE THE WORLD WITH A GOOD SHOW EVERY FOUR YEARS.